

# Cellulite

Cellulite is a popular term to describe fat deposits under the skin. It is characterized by a dimpled or orange-peel appearance due to structural changes underneath the skin's top layer. Cellulite is a perfectly normal and harmless condition, however, it is a cosmetic concern of many people.

Cellulite is a normal occurrence resulting from uneven fatty deposits, mostly below the waistline. In women, fat is arranged in large chambers underneath a fairly thin layer of skin. These chambers are separated by columns of collagen fibers. In obese (overweight) persons, too much fat is being stuffed into these chambers, causing the pitting and bulging of the skin. In addition, as women age, the fibers shrink and thicken, pulling the skin downward. This results in a quilt-like appearance on the skin surface, especially in areas such as the buttocks, thighs, or hips. Most women develop cellulite as they age, regardless of their race. According to some studies, as many as 95% of women over age 30 develop some form of cellulite in their body.

Female hormones (estrogen, and to a lesser extent, progesterone) play important roles in the formation of cellulite. Estrogen stimulates the storage of fat, which is needed for menstruation, pregnancy, and lactation. In addition, during the later phases of pregnancy, estrogen also causes the breakdown of collagen fibers to relax the cervix, making it possible for a woman to deliver her baby. This collagen breakdown sets the stage for the formation of cellulite. Progesterone may also contribute to the cellulite problem by weakening veins and causing water retention and weight gain.

Cellulite is mostly a female problem. Due to different body physiques, men tend to have lower percentages of body fat, while women have higher percentages. In addition, men tend to accumulate fat in the abdominal area while women have fat deposits mostly in the buttocks and thighs. Men have thicker skin and the chambers are smaller and more tightly-held together. Therefore, cellulite is not often found in men.

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